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Future Horizons: Humanities: The Civil Rights Movement Class: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_



**CHOICES IN LITTLE ROCK**

The efforts to desegregate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957 resulted in a crisis that historian Taylor Branch once described as “the most severe test of the Constitution since the Civil War.” This material explores civic choices — the decisions people make as citizens in a democracy. Those decisions, both then and now, reveal that democracy is not a product but a work in progress, a work that is shaped in every generation by the choices that we make about ourselves and others. Although those choices may not seem important at the time, little by little, they define an individual, delineate a community, and ultimately distinguish a nation. Those choices build on the work of earlier generations and leave legacies for those to come.

**Essential Questions:**

* What are the consequences of dividing people by race?
* How can individuals and groups in a democracy organize in order to correct injustices?
* What are the political, legal, and social consequences from a legacy of segregation in the United States?

**PART I: Gallery Walk**

**DIRECTIONS:** The Supreme Court decision in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) permitted the growth of a system of state and local laws known as “Jim Crow” laws. They established racial barriers in almost every aspect of American life. In many places, black and white Americans could not publicly sit, drink, or eat side by side. Churches, theaters, parks, even cemeteries were segregated. “By the early 1900s,” writes historian Lerone Bennett, Jr., “America was two nations — one white, one black, separate and unequal.” He likens segregation to “a wall, a system, a way of separating people from people.” That wall did not go up in a single day; it was built “brick by brick, bill by bill, fear by fear.” [© 2008 Facing History and Ourselves]

A legacy of segregation was established in the United States as many Americans in the nineteenth century came to believe that some races were superior to others. Segregation remained firmly in place until the 1960s and 1970s, when through tireless work of individuals during the Civil Rights Movement challenged the decades of separation. To take a further look at this and the events that led to the crisis in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957, you will participate in a “gallery walk” to give you a deeper look at what happened. At each station you will examine the documents that provides evidence of the effects that *Plessy v. Ferguson* had on American life. Follow the directions for each station.

**Station One:** Photographs of Segregation

**DIRECTIONS:** Look at the photographs of Jim Crow Era signs. Analyze them and discuss with your group where you think these signs were posted. Then answer the question below.

1. What do all of these signs have in common? What is the message of these signs and what do they imply? Explain.

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**Station Two:** Segregation Laws

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the laws from the various states and look at the document about segregated schools. Read carefully and talk with your school group about what you read. Answer the question below.

1. What law surprised you the most? Why? Explain.

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**Station Three:** Graphs & Tables of Consequences of Segregation

**DIRECTIONS:** Look at these graphs and charts made by the U.S. government about the consequences of segregation. Ask any questions to your group members and then answer the question below.

1. Summarize these charts. Write 3 consequences of segregation below.

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**Station One:** Photographs (1)



**Station One:** Photographs (2)



**Station Two:** Laws (1)

**State and Local Segregation Laws**

Segregations laws touched every aspect of everyday life. For example, in 1935, Oklahoma prohibited African Americans and whites from boating together. In 1905, Georgia established separate parks for blacks and whites. In 1930, Birmingham, Alabama, made it illegal for the two races to play checkers or dominoes together. The Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site Interpretive Staff compiled the following list:

* Barbers. No colored barber shall serve as a barber (to) white girls or women (Georgia).
* Blind Wards. The board of trustees shall ... maintain a separate building ... on separate ground for the admission, care, instruction, and support of all blind persons of the colored or black race (Louisiana).
* Burial. The officer in charge shall not bury, or allow to be buried, any colored persons upon ground set apart or used for the burial of white persons (Georgia).
* Buses. All passenger stations in this state operated by any motor transportation company shall have separate waiting rooms or space and separate ticket windows for the white and colored races (Alabama).
* Child Custody. It shall be unlawful for any parent, relative, or other white person in this State, having the control or custody of any white child, by right of guardianship, natural or acquired, or otherwise, to dispose of, give or surrender such white child permanently into the custody, control, maintenance, or support, of a Negro (South Carolina).
* Education. The schools for white children and the schools for Negro children shall be conducted separately (Florida).
* Libraries. The state librarian is directed to fit up and maintain a separate place for the use of the colored people who may come to the library for the purpose of reading books or periodicals (North Carolina).
* Mental Hospitals. The Board of Control shall see that proper and distinct apartments are arranged for said patients, so that in no case shall Negroes and white persons be together (Georgia).
* Militia. The white and colored militia shall be separately enrolled, and shall never be compelled to serve in the same organization. No organization of colored troops shall be permitted where white troops are available, and colored troops shall be under the command of white officers (North Carolina).
* Nurses. No person or corporation shall require any white female nurse to nurse in wards or rooms in hospitals, either public or private, in which Negro men are placed (Alabama).
* Prisons. The warden shall see that the white convicts shall have separate apartments for both eating and sleeping from the Negro convicts (Mississippi).
* Reform Schools. The children of white and colored races committed to the houses of reform shall be kept entirely separate from each other (Kentucky).

Continued…

**Station Two:** Laws (2)

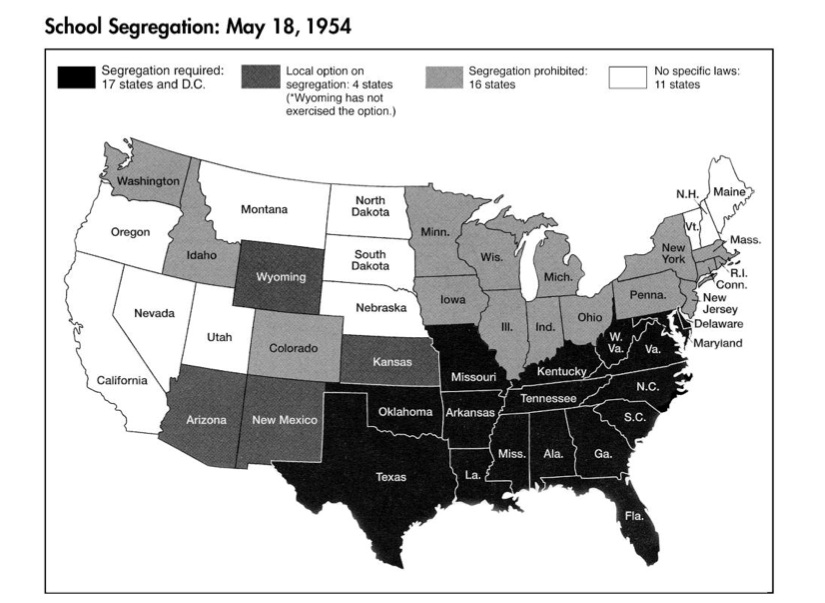
* Teaching. Any instructor who shall teach in any school, college, or institution where members of the white and colored race are received and enrolled as pupils for instruction shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction thereof, shall be fined ... (Oklahoma).
* Wine and Beer. All persons licensed to conduct the business of selling beer or wine ... shall serve either white people exclusively or colored people exclusively and shall not sell to the two races within the same room at any time (Georgia).

**In addition:**

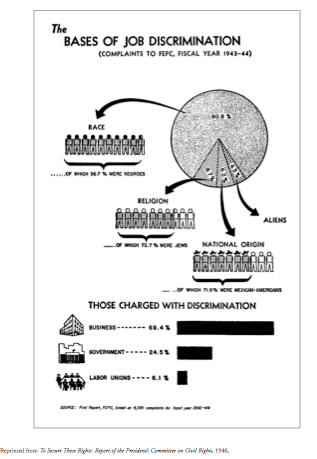
* Racially separate washrooms required in factories and mines (6 states)
* White and black prisoners could not be chained together (6 states)
* Segregated parks, playgrounds, bathing and fishing and boating facilities, amusement parks, racetracks, pool halls, circuses, theaters, and public halls (8 states)
* Separate waiting rooms for bus and train travelers (10 states)
* African Americans required to sit in the backs of buses and streetcars (11 states)
* Segregated railroad passengers on trips within the state’s borders (14 states)
* Segregated mental patients (14 states)
* Segregated public schools (14 states with 11.5 million students and 4 other states allowed segregation if local communities wanted it)\*

\* This list was derived from a larger list composed by the Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site Interpretive Staff. Last Updated January 5, 1998. http//www.nps.gov/malu/documents/jim crowlaws.htm.

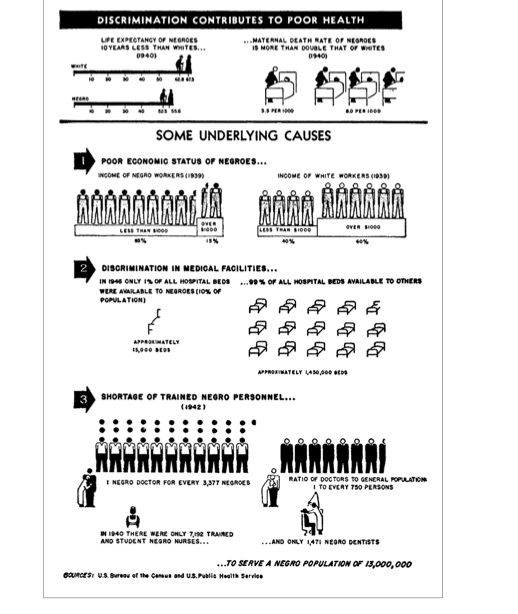
**Station Two:** Laws (3)



**Station Three:** Graphs & Charts (1)



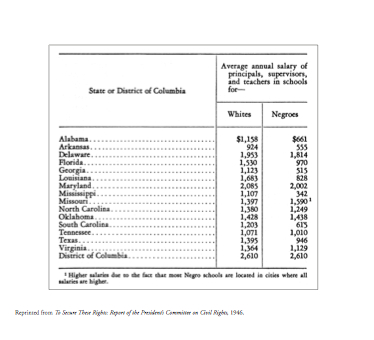
**Station Three:** Graphs & Charts (2)



**Station Three:** Graphs & Charts (3)



**Station Three:** Graphs & Charts (4)



**PART II: Summary**

1. Identify three (3) things that you learned about segregation from this activity.

* One thing I learned about segregation is… \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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* Another this is… \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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* Lastly, another thing I learned about segregation is… \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. How do you define segregation? Write your definition in *your own words.*

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1. What impact did the did the decision of Plessy v. Ferguson and segregation have on American life? Think of at least two (2) things and explain your answer.

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1. Some people believe that segregation was not about race but about power. How does the evidence you looked at in this activity support this idea?

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1. Explain how the evidence for this activity suggests that “separate but equal” can ever be equal?

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Future Horizons: Humanities: The Civil Rights Movement Class: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_



**CHOICES IN LITTLE ROCK**

The efforts to desegregate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957 resulted in a crisis that historian Taylor Branch once described as “the most severe test of the Constitution since the Civil War.” This material explores civic choices — the decisions people make as citizens in a democracy. Those decisions, both then and now, reveal that democracy is not a product but a work in progress, a work that is shaped in every generation by the choices that we make about ourselves and others. Although those choices may not seem important at the time, little by little, they define an individual, delineate a community, and ultimately distinguish a nation. Those choices build on the work of earlier generations and leave legacies for those to come.

**Essential Questions:**

* What are the consequences of dividing people by race?
* How can individuals and groups in a democracy organize in order to correct injustices?
* What are the political, legal, and social consequences from a legacy of segregation in the United States?

**Think About:**

Imagine what it must have been like to live in a segregated society. How might African Americans express their outrage? How might they persuade other Americans to join them in destroying the system? Write your thoughts and answers in the space below.

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**DIRECTIONS:** Read the background information below. As you read, text code and annotate the material so that you can annotate the text and show your understanding, where you have questions, and what aspects you would like to discuss in class.

**Background Information:**

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Americans formed a number of organizations to express their outrage at segregation and attack the laws that supported it. Among them was the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Its founders included both black and white Americans. In 1935, the group decided to systematically challenge segregation in the nation’s courts. Professor Charles Houston of Howard University Law School led a special legal team with the help of Thurgood Marshall, a former student of Houston’s. After Houston retired, Marshall took charge of the team. The aim was to attack segregation by challenging the idea central to *Plessy v. Ferguson* — the idea that separate facilities are truly equal. The team’s first cases dealt with segregation in higher education. Few states could afford to provide “separate but equal” legal, medical, and other professional training for black and white students.

Slowly, the legal team assembled by Houston and Marshall made progress. In 1949, the Supreme Court ruled that a Texas law school set up only for African American students was not equal to the state’s all-white law school [*Sweatt v. Painter*]. In a 1950 decision [*McLaurin v. Oklahoma*], the justices concluded that an African American student who was allowed to enroll at the University of Oklahoma’s law school was not receiving an education equal to that of white students as long as he was kept apart from his classmates in the classroom, cafeteria, and library. The court ruled that “such restrictions impair and inhibit his ability to study, engage in discussions and exchange views with other students, and in general, to learn his profession.”

Little by little, ruling by ruling, the NAACP was tearing down the legal wall that separated Americans. After chipping away at segregation in higher education, NAACP lawyers turned their attention to segregation in the nation’s public schools. This time they would argue that even if separate facilities were equal, they would still violate the 14th Amendment. The lawyers filed law suits in four states and the District of Columbia. Each challenged the constitutionality of separating children by race. In late 1952, the justices decided that the cases were so similar that they should be heard together. So they combined them into a single case that came to be known as *Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka et al*. The Supreme Court’s decision came in May 1954. It declared that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional.

When the Supreme Court issued its decision in the Brown case, the justices did not provide guidelines for complying with the decision. They waited until May 31, 1955, to rule that federal courts were to decide whether a school district was acting in “good faith” by desegregating its schools “with all deliberate speed.”

**Expressing Your Opinion:**

Look at the political cartoon on the next page. It expresses the artist’s opinion about the efforts to enforce the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision and the end of segregation. Work with a partner to answer the questions that go with the cartoon. After that, draw your cartoon that expresses your view of the impact the *Brown* decision had on students across the nation. Make sure your cartoon has a title and that it shows your understanding of segregation, its impact on American life, and that the enforcement of the *Brown* decision will change the way Americans live and work.

**“Inch by Inch”**



**“Inch by Inch” Comprehension Questions**

1. Describe exactly what you see in the cartoon. Pay attention to shapes and the position of people and/or objects. Notice the scale used in the drawing.

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1. What symbol does the cartoonist use to show school segregation? What do the children in the drawing stand for?

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1. What is the message of the cartoon?

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1. Bill Maudlin called his cartoon “Inch by Inch.” What other title might be appropriate?

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Future Horizons: Humanities: The Civil Rights Movement Class: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_



**CHOICES IN LITTLE ROCK**

In response to *Brown v. Board of Education*, people made a variety of decisions. In September 1957, Little Rock’s largest and most prestigious high school- Central High- was desegregated. This causes a crisis that not only made national attention but brought about changes that can never be forgotten or denied.

**Essential Questions:**

* How do the choices people make, individually and collectively, shape a society?
* What were the choices individuals and groups had and made during the crisis in Little Rock in 1957?
* What ways do individuals and groups use the Constitution to protect their rights?

**To Think About:**

Today were are going to learn about what the first day of school was like for the first African-American students to attend Central High in Little Rock, Arkansas. Before we learn about them, try to remember your first day of school at Flushing International High School. What did you expect the day to be like? What were you nervous or afraid of? What did you look forward to? How did you prepare for the day? What surprised you about the experience? Write your reactions and memories below.

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**Background Information:**

In 1955, Virgil Blossom, the superintendent of schools in Little Rock, announced a plan to integrate the schools gradually beginning in 1957 with Central High, one of three high schools in the city. The other two were Horace Mann, a high school for African American students, and Hall, a new all-white school located in a well-to-do section of the city. Neither Horace Mann nor Hall was scheduled for immediate integration.

As required by law, the school board sent Blossom’s plan to a federal district court for approval. Despite challenges from African Americans who wanted to speed up the process and white Americans who wanted to stop it, the court approved the plan, and by the summer of 1957, school officials had selected 17 African American students from over 200 applicants for enrollment at Central High.

School officials rejected many of the applicants because their grades were not high enough. Others were rejected because officials did not think they could handle the pressures of being a small minority in a school that was overwhelmingly white. (The plan called for the enrollment of fewer than 17 African American students in a school attended by about 2,000 white students.) Still other African American students dropped out on their own after the superintendent told them that they would not be allowed to participate in sports or any other extracurricular activity. As resistance to integration became more vocal in the summer of 1957 in Little Rock and elsewhere, a number of parents withdrew their children out of fear for their safety.

By the time school opened, only nine African American students were prepared to attend Central High School — Minnijean Brown, Elizabeth Eckford, Ernest Green, Thelma Mothershed, Melba Pattillo, Gloria Ray, Terrence Roberts, Jefferson Thomas, and Carlotta Walls. Despite the talk on TV and the radio and in the newspapers, the “Little Rock Nine” did not believe that integration would lead to violence in Little Rock. Ernest Green recalls:

*There hadn’t been any trouble expected, given the fact that there had been other schools in Arkansas that had been integrated — Fort Smith, Arkansas, and some others. The buses in Little Rock had been desegregated without any problem. The library was integrated; the medical school and the law school at the University had admitted some blacks. So there was an expectation that there would be minimal problems, but nothing major that would put Little Rock on the map. The first indication that I had of it was the night before we were to go to school, the Labor Day Monday night. [Governor] Orval Faubus came on TV and indicated that he was calling out the [Arkansas] National Guard to prevent our entrance into Central because of what he thought were threats to our lives. He was doing it for our own “protection.” Even at that time that was his line. He said that the troops would be out in front of the school and they would bar our entrance to Central — for our protection as well as for the protection and tranquility of the city.*7

After hearing Governor Faubus on television, Blossom asked the “Little Rock Nine” to stay home Tuesday morning, while he sought guidance from U.S. District Judge Ronald N. Davies. The judge ordered the school board to proceed with integration as planned. The “Little Rock Nine” were to report to Central High the next day — Wednesday, September 4. Fearful for their safety, Daisy Bates, the president of the Arkansas NAACP, suggested that they come to school as a group. She planned to ask religious leaders in the city to accompany them.

Fifteen-year-old Elizabeth Eckford knew nothing of the plan. In her haste, Daisy Bates had forgotten to get word to her. So early Wednesday morning, Eckford ironed the dress she made for her first day at Central High, said good-bye to her worried parents, and set off for school, alone.

When Eckford reached Central High, she found herself surrounded by an angry crowd that taunted and threatened her as she tried to enter the building. The soldiers who guarded the building turned her away. Unsure of what to do and terrified of the mob, Eckford quickly headed for a bus stop even as the crowd continued to scream and jeer.

7 Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s. Vintage, 1990, p.39.

**Elizabeth Eckford’s Account**

**PART ONE: In Her Own Words**

**DIRECTIONS:** You will listen to, and read, Elizabeth Eckford’s account of her arrival at Central High School. As you do this, focus on the choices Eckford made that morning.

**Eckford said…**

*“And I approached the guards at the corner, as I had seen other students do, they closed ranks. So, I thought maybe I am not supposed to enter at this point. So, I walked further down the line of guards to where there was another sidewalk and I attempted to pass through there. But when I stepped up, they crossed rifles. And again I said to myself maybe I’m supposed to go down to where the main entrance is. So I walked toward the center of the street and when I got to about the middle and I approached the guard he directed me across the street into the crowd. It was only then that I realized that they were barring me so that I wouldn’t go to school.*



*As I stepped out into the street, the people who had been across the street start surging forward behind me. So, I headed in the opposite direction to where there was another bus stop. Safety to me meant getting to the bus stop. I think I sat there for a long time before the bus came. In the meantime, people were screaming behind me. What I would have described as a crowd before, to my ears sounded like a mob.”*

1. Why didn’t Elizabeth Eckford turn on the crowd that followed her to the bus stop? What might have happened had she done so? Why?

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**PART TWO: On Record**

**DIRECTIONS:** Study the photographs of Elizabeth Eckford’s first day of school. Really look at these images and examine what is happening. Then answer the questions relating to these two images.



* Describe what you **see** in each photograph. Where are people standing? How are they relating to one another? If you were there, what sounds might you hear? If you were a reporter, whom would you want to interview? What questions might you ask?

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**Think About:**

Not everyone in the two photographs was harassing Eckford. Some people were *bystanders —* people who witness an event but are neither victims nor perpetrators. P*erpetrator* means wrongdoer — in this case, a person who called Eckford names and threatened her life.) Marcia Webb, a white student at Central High and a bystander on September 4, 1957, later reflected on her choices that morning:

*I remember the picture in the newspaper of Elizabeth Eckford with the jeering white faces behind her. And at that moment I thought, Marcie, you were there and you never once thought about what was going on with Elizabeth Eckford. You were glad there weren’t any violent demonstrations; you were glad no one was hurt physically. But then I realized what hurt can come from words, from silence even, from just being ignored. And when I think about it now, I think about it with regret. I’m sorry to say now looking back that what was happening didn’t have more significance and I didn’t take more of an active role. But I was interested in the things that most kids are.*8

8Joan I. Duffy, “A Reunion with History: Central High Will Observe 1957’s Rite of Passage.” Memphis Commercial Appeal, September 21, 1957.

What is the pain that comes from names and labels, the silence of neighbors or classmates, or “just being ignored”? How might the situation at Central High School have been different if Marcia Webb and other white students had regarded Eckford and other African American students as “kids” much like themselves?

**PART THREE: In Their Shoes**

**DIRECTIONS:** Elizabeth tells her story of her first day at Central High School in Little Rock from her point of view. Choose one person in the photograph above and write a short story about how that individual happened to be at Central High School that morning. What choices did that person make?

* Which person are you choosing to write about? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Why did you choose this person? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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* Write their story as described in the directions below. Give as much detail as you feel you can.

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* How do you think the person you chose may have felt about his or her behavior in years after this event? Why do you think this?

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**PART FOUR: In Summary**

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the discussion questions below and then answer giving evidence from all that we have done in these lessons and pervious to support your opinion and thoughts.

1. What is a mob? How is it different from a gathering or a crowd? Explain.

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1. What power do photographs have to change history? Marcia Webb never forgot the image of Elizabeth Eckford that appeared in the newspapers. The same was true for millions of other Americans. Why do you think so many people have described that image as unforgettable?

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1. In 1987, Elizabeth Eckford said of her ordeal: “*I remember this tremendous feeling of being alone and I didn’t know how I was going to get out of there. I didn’t know whether I would be injured. There was this deafening roar. I could hear individual voices, but I was not conscious of numbers, I was conscious of being alone.”* What did Eckford mean when she said, “I was conscious of being alone”?

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1. What turns a group of ordinary people into a mob? What is the power of a mob?

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1. Perlesta Hollingsworth is an African American who lived near Central High in 1957. In 1997, he told a reporter, “*The shocking thing to me in 1957 was the number of whites who didn’t participate in the aggression, who wouldn’t do anything but look. Neighbors would express dismay, but wouldn’t do anything, wouldn’t speak out against it, would go ahead and close their doors to it.”* Many sociologists believe that bystanders influence an event by the amount and the kind of attention they pay to the event. Why do you think many people expressed disappointment or sadness but wouldn’t speak out?

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**Who Were The Little Rock Nine?**



*Top Row, left to right: Ernest Green, Melba Pattillo, Jefferson Thomas, Carlotta Walls; Daisy Bates (president of the Arkansas NAACP and advisor to the Little Rock Nine), Terrence Roberts. Seated, left to right: Thelma Mothershed, Minnijean Brown, Elizabeth Eckford; Gloria Ray.*

**Ernest Green** became the first African American student to graduate from Central High School in 1958. He later earned a bachelor’s degree from Michigan State University. Green served as Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Affairs in the administration of President Jimmy Carter. He is currently a managing partner and vice president of Lehman Brothers in Washington, D.C.

**Melba Pattillo Beals** is a writer who has worked as a reporter at NBC and People magazine. Her memoir, Warriors Don’t Cry, won several literary awards in 1995. She earned degrees at San Francisco State and Columbia University and today lives in San Francisco.

**Jefferson Thomas** served as president of the student council and was an outstanding track athlete at Dunbar Junior High in Little Rock. He gave up those activities to attend Central High. He, along with Carlotta Walls, graduated from Central in 1960. Today he is an accountant with the U.S. Department of Defense living in Anaheim, California.

**Carlotta Walls LaNier** was the youngest of the Little Rock Nine. She graduated from Central High along with Jefferson Thomas in 1960. She earned a B.A. from the University of Northern Colorado. In 1968, she married Ira LaNier in Denver, Colorado. She and her family still live in Colorado, where she works as a real estate agent.

**Terrence Roberts** entered Central High as a junior. He earned a B.A. from California State University–Los Angeles, a master’s degree from UCLA, and a Ph.D. in psychology from Southern Illinois University. He heads the masters in psychology program at Antioch University in Los Angeles.

**Thelma Mothershed-Wair** earned a master’s degree in guidance counseling and worked as an educator in the East St. Louis school system for 28 years before retiring in 1994. She now does volunteer work in her community, including teaching survival skills at a homeless shelter.

**Minnijean Brown Trickey** was expelled from Central High in February 1958, after several incidents, including one in which she dumped a bowl of chili on a student in the school cafeteria. She stayed with the family of psychologist Kenneth Clark in New York City until she graduated from high school. She later earned a B.A. from Southern Illinois University. She and her husband moved to Canada after she graduated and raised six children on a farm. The family now lives in Maryland.

**Elizabeth Eckford** still lives in Little Rock. She served in the U.S. Army and worked as a journalist. In 1974, she returned to the home in which she grew up and is now a part-time social worker and mother of two sons. Eckford, who has a degree in history, serves on the board of the Central High Museum and Visitors Center near the school.

**Gloria Ray Karlmark** graduated from Illinois Technical College and earned a postgraduate degree in Sweden. She and her husband live in Europe, where she has worked as an executive officer of a Dutch company and the publisher of a European computer magazine.

**The Choices The Leaders Made**

Why do you think Elizabeth Eckford’s first day at school turned out so differently than she and others expected. What went wrong? Some of the explanation can be found in the choices made by two leaders in the days immediately before and after school opened in Little Rock. Those leaders are Arkansas Governor Orval E. Faubus and U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

For 17 days, the Arkansas National Guard kept the Little Rock Nine from entering Central High. During that period, a number of people tried to resolve the crisis. Both those who favored integration and those who opposed it saw the crisis as a constitutional issue — a question of federalism. Does a governor or any other state official have the right to disobey a decision issued by the U.S. Supreme Court?

In a federal system, some rights belong to both the nation and the states; others belong only to the nation or only to the states. The line between the nation’s powers and those that belong solely to the states is not always clear-cut. Those who argue in favor of a strong central government often point to Article VI of the Constitution. It states that the Constitution, federal laws, and treaties approved by the Senate are supreme — that is, they are the highest law of the land. It also states that members of all three branches of government at both the state and national level are required to support the U.S. Constitution. Those who favor states rights often focus on the 10th Amendment to the Constitution, which says that all powers not given to the federal government or specifically denied to the states belong to the states.

On September 14, President Eisenhower and Governor Faubus met in Newport, Rhode Island, to privately work out their differences. At that meeting, the president reminded the governor of his responsibilities under the Constitution. Eisenhower did not want Faubus to remove the troops; he wanted the governor to use the National Guard to protect the nine students so that integration could proceed as planned.

66While the two men were talking, lawyers for the NAACP were in court on behalf of the nine African American students. The lawyers argued that the governor was interfering with the students’ right to attend school. If he felt that they were in danger, as he indicated in his speech, his obligation under the law was to protect them rather than side with the mob. On Friday, September 20, Federal Judge Ronald Davies ordered Faubus to stop blocking integration. To President Eisenhower’s disgust, Faubus responded by withdrawing the National Guard. The Little Rock Nine were left defenseless.

The following Monday, about 100 local police officers placed wooden barricades around Central High as more than a thousand angry white men and women from Arkansas and surrounding states gathered in front of the building. To avoid the crowd, the African American students entered the school through a side door. When word got out that the students were in the building, the crowd went on a rampage — attacking journalists, breaking windows, smashing doors, and nearly lynching the Little Rock Nine. The police had to smuggle the African American students out of the building for their own safety. Early the next morning, Woodrow W. Mann, the mayor of Little Rock, sent a telegraph to President Eisenhower asking for federal help in keeping the peace.

That evening President Eisenhower addressed the nation on television and radio. He told Americans, “The very basis of our individual rights and freedoms rests upon the certainty that the President and the Executive Branch of government will support and insure the carrying out of the decisions of the Federal courts, even, when necessary, with all the means at the President’s command.” He added: “Mob rule cannot be allowed to override the decisions of our courts.” He then ordered the 101st Airborne Division to Little Rock.

The next day, September 25, U.S. soldiers escorted the Little Rock Nine to school. This time, Melba Pattillo, one of the Little Rock Nine, recalls, “I went in not through the side doors, but up the front stairs, and there was a feeling of pride and hope that yes, this is the United States; yes, there is a reason I salute the flag; and it’s going to be okay.”

**The Impact of a Decision**

In her book *Warriors Don’t Cry*, Melba Pattillo describes her feelings on September 23, 1957 — the day she and the other eight African American students had to sneak out of the school to save their lives:

*What I felt inside was stark raving fear — terrible, wrenching, awful fear.... There are no words for how I felt inside. I had known no pain like that because I did not know what I had done wrong. You see, when you're fifteen years old and someone’s going to hit you or hurt you, you want to know what you did wrong. Although I knew the differences between black and white, I didn't know the penalties one paid for being black at that time.*

Three days later, she wrote in the diary she kept in high school:

*It’s Thursday, September 26, 1957. Now I have a bodyguard. I know very well that the President didn’t send those soldiers just to protect me but to show support for an idea — the idea that a [state] government can’t ignore federal laws. Still, I feel especially cared about because the guard is there. If he wasn’t there, I’d hear more of the voices of those people who say I’m a nigger ... that I’m not valuable, that I have no right to be alive.*

**“They Spat in My Face”**

In her book, Daisy Bates, president of the Arkansas branch of the NAACP, reported a con- versation with Dr. Benjamin Fine, the education editor of The New York Times. He was among the first reporters to cover the Little Rock story. Fine came to her house a few days after the National Guard kept Elizabeth Eckford from entering the school. Bates quotes Fine as saying:

*“I was standing in front of the school that day. Suddenly there was a shout — ‘They’re here! The niggers are coming!’ I saw a sweet little girl who looked about fifteen, walking alone. She tried several times to pass through the guards. The last time she tried, they put their bayonets in front of her. When they did this, she became panicky. For a moment she just stood there trembling. Then she seemed to calm down and started walking toward the bus stop with the mob baying at her heels like a pack of hounds. The women were shouting, ‘Get her! Lynch her!’ The men were yelling, ‘Go home, you bastard of a black bitch!’ She finally made it to the bus stop and sat down on the bench. I sat down beside her and said, ‘I’m a reporter from The New York Times. May I have your name?’ She just sat there, her head down. Tears were streaming down her cheeks from under her sunglasses. Daisy, I don’t know what made me put my arm around her, lifting her chin, saying, ‘Don’t let them see you cry.’ Maybe she reminded me of my fifteen-year-old daughter, Jill.*

*“There must have been five hundred around us by this time. I vaguely remember someone hollering, ‘Get a rope and drag her over to this tree.’ Suddenly I saw a white-haired, kind-faced woman fighting her way through the mob. She looked at Elizabeth and then screamed at the mob, ‘Leave this child alone! Why are you tormenting her? Six months from now, you will hang your heads in shame.’ The mob shouted, ‘Another nigger-lover. Get out of here!’ The woman, who I found out later was Mrs. Grace Lorch, the wife of Dr. Lee Lorch, professor at Philander Smith College, turned to me and said, ‘We have to do something. Let’s try to get a cab.’*

*“We took Elizabeth across the street to the drugstore. I remained on the sidewalk with Elizabeth while Mrs. Lorch tried to enter the drugstore to call a cab. But the hoodlums slammed the door in her face and wouldn’t let her in. She pleaded with them to call a cab for the child. They closed in on her saying, ‘Get out of here, you bitch!’ Just then the city bus came. Mrs. Lorch and Elizabeth got on. Elizabeth must have been in a state of shock. She never uttered a word. When the bus pulled away, the mob closed in around me. ‘We saw you put your arm around that little bitch. Now it’s your turn.’ A drab, middle-aged woman said viciously, ‘Grab him and kick him in the balls!’ A girl I had seen hustling in one of the local bars screamed, ‘A dirty New York Jew! Get him!’ A man asked me, ‘Are you a Jew?’ I said, ‘Yes.’ He then said to the mob, ‘Let him be! We’ll take care of him later.’*

*“The irony of it all, Daisy, is that during all this time the national guardsmen made no effort to protect Elizabeth or help me. Instead, they threatened to have me arrested for inciting to riot.”\**

\* Daisy Bates, The Long Shadow of Little Rock: A Memoir. David McKay Company, Inc., 1962, pp. 69–71. \*\* David Halberstam, The Fifties. Fawcett Books, 1993, pp. 681–682.

1. Why does Benjamin Fine think he tried to help Elizabeth Eckford? Did he do the right thing?

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2. What is the danger in a journalist becoming a part of the story he or she is reporting?

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3. David Halberstam, a young reporter in the 1950s, wrote that when Ben Fine comforted Elizabeth Eckford, he lost “his cool.” “He had started to argue with the mob and the Times had been forced to bring him back to New York.”\*\* Halberstam maintains that however a reporter “feels about the events taking place in front of him, it has to be kept bottled up.” What is he suggesting about the role of a reporter? To what extent do you think Fine would agree? Did the Times do the right thing when it replaced Fine with another reporter?

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**Legacies of Little Rock**

**President Bill Clinton’s Remarks**

On September 25, 1997, President Bill Clinton spoke at Central High School to mark the 40th anniversary of the integration of the school. As you read, underline the way he answers the following questions:

* Who is he honoring and why?
* Whose story is he telling?
* What has he learned from his story?
* What does he want his audience to learn from the story?

*Forty years ago, a single image first seared the heart and stirred the conscience of our nation. So powerful, most of us who saw it then recall it still. A 15-year-old girl, wearing a crisp black and white dress, carrying only a notebook, surrounded by large crowds of boys and girls, men and women, soldiers and police officers. Her head held high, her eyes fixed straight ahead. And she is utterly alone.*

*On September 4, 1957, Elizabeth Eckford walked through this door for her first day of school, utterly alone. She was turned away by people who were afraid of change, instructed by ignorance, hating what they simply could not understand.... Elizabeth Eckford, along with her eight schoolmates, were turned away on September 4th, but the Little Rock Nine did not turn back. Forty years ago today, they climbed these steps, passed through this door and moved our nation. And for that, we must all thank them.*

*Today, we honor those who made it possible, their parents first. As Eleanor Roosevelt said of them, to give your child for a cause is even harder than to give yourself. To honor my friend Daisy Bates and Wiley Branton and Thurgood Marshall, the NAACP and all who guided these children.*

*To honor President Eisenhower, Attorney General Brownell and the men of the 101st Airborne who enforced the Constitution; to honor every student, every teacher, every minister, every Little Rock resident, black or white, who offered a word of kindness, a glance of respect or a hand of friendship; to honor those who gave us the opportunity to be part of this day, a celebration and rededication.*

*But most of all, we come to honor the Little Rock Nine. Most of those who just watched these events unfold can never understand fully the sacrifice they made. Imagine, all of you, what it would be like to come to school one day and be shoved against lockers, tripped down stairways, taunted day after day by your classmates,*

*to go all through school with no hope of going to a school play or being on a basketball team, or learning in simple peace....*

*But let me tell you something else that was true about that time. Before Little Rock, for me and other white children, the struggles of black people, whether we were sympathetic or hostile to them, were mostly background music in our normal, self-absorbed lives. We were all, like you, more concerned about our friends and our lives day in and day out. But then we saw what was happening in our own backyard, and we all had to deal with it. Where did we stand? What did we believe? How did we want to live? It was Little Rock that made racial equality a driving obsession in my life....*

*Well, 40 years later we know that we all benefit, all of us, when we learn together, work together and come together. That is, after all, what it means to be an American. Forty years later, we know, notwithstanding some cynics, that all our children can learn, and this school proves it.*

*Forty years later, we know when the Constitutional rights of our citizens are threatened, the national government must guarantee them. Talk is fine, but when they are*

*threatened, you need strong laws, faithfully enforced, and upheld by independent courts.*

*Forty years later we know there are still more doors to be opened, doors to be opened wider, doors we have to keep from being shut again now.*

*Forty years later we know freedom and equality cannot be realized without responsibility for self, family and the duties of citizenship, or without a commitment to building a community of shared destiny, and a genuine sense of belonging.*

*Forty years later, we know the question of race is more complex and more important than ever, embracing no longer just blacks and whites, or blacks and whites and Hispanics and Native Americans, but now people from all parts of the Earth coming here to redeem the promise of America.*

*Forty years later, frankly, we know we are bound to come back where we started. After all the weary years and silent tears, after all the stony roads and bitter rods, the question of race is, in the end, still an affair of the heart.*

*But ... if these are lessons, what do we have to do? First, we must all reconcile [settle our differences]. Then, we must all face the facts of today; and finally, we must act....*

*And what are the facts?*

*It is a fact, my fellow Americans, that there are still too many places where opportunity for education and work are not equal, where disintegration of family and neighborhood make it more difficult....*

*There is still discrimination in America.*

*There are still people who can’t get over it, who can’t let it go, who can’t go through the day unless they have somebody else to look down on. And it manifests itself in our streets and in our neighborhoods, and in the workplace, and in the schools. And it is wrong. And we have to keep working on it, not just with our voices, but with our laws. And we have to engage each other in it....*

*We have to decide ... all you young people have to decide, will we stand as a shining example or a stunning rebuke to the world of tomorrow? For the alternative to integration is not isolation or a new Separate but Equal, it is disintegration.*

*Only the American idea is strong enough to hold us together. We believe — whether our ancestors came here in slave ships or on the Mayflower, whether they came through the portals [gates] of Ellis Island or on a plane to San Francisco, whether they have been here for thousands of years, we believe that every individual possesses a spark of possibility....*

*... We must be one America. The Little Rock Nine taught us that.... We have to act. All of us have to act, each of us has to do something, especially our young people must seek out people who are different from themselves and speak freely and frankly to discover they share the same dreams.*

**Governor Mike Huckabee’s Remarks**

On September 25, 1997, Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee also spoke at Central High School to mark the 40th anniversary of the integration of the school.

*Some have asked: how long are we going to deal with this Central crisis situation? Are we going to have to relive it every few years? …*

*Well, let me tell you how long we will deal with it — until justice is the same for every human being whether he or she is black or white, we will deal with it. Until the same rules apply to get a bank loan for every person regardless of who he or she is, we will deal with it. As long as there are whites who turn around and see a black person coming and bring fear to their hearts, we will deal with it. And as long as there are blacks who look and see and have resentment toward a white person, we will deal with it. We will deal with it until the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King lives in all of our hearts, and that is that we will judge people by the character of their hearts and not by the color of their skin....*

*Today, as we dedicate the Little Rock Central Visitor Center, I will tell you that last Friday my daughter and I went there. We walked through that exhibit and it brought memories to me of the time when Sarah was 11 and we went through Yad Vashem in Jerusalem to visit that incredible place that is dedicated to the memory of the victims of the Holocaust — another one of our history’s horrors. And as we went through Yad Vashem, she saw the pictures of the horrible treatment and of the extraordinary injustices of the evil that was marked by that time. I never will forget when we came to the end of that exhibit and there at the guest book ... was a space for comments.*

*As long as I live I will remember as my daughter paused and then wrote words that will forever be in my mind. She wrote simple words. I wondered as we went through it, did she understand the message of it, did she get it? If there was any doubt, it was erased as I looked as those words. Because those words simply said, “Why didn’t somebody do something? Why didn’t somebody do something?”*

*In silence, we left and I knew she got it. Today, as the world once again revisits Little Rock and the great state of Arkansas and its great people, I hope that never, ever, ever does someone have to ask why didn’t someone do something. As for those who go through that visitor center and may ask why didn’t someone do something, I hope they will take a good, long look and realize that today we celebrate nine people who did do something.*

What idea does he emphasize in his speech?

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